1: Hocart Y-5 (ca. 1920) 1929 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Lakemba

The first child, boy or girl, of the High Chief is treated with state. Women come from Tumbou, Levuka, the country, to hold it by turns in their arms, not allowing it to touch the ground for ten days. They may not sleep in the house where the child is, they may not wash. The chief pays them with feasts and gifts. Leading noblemen come in. Every day a feast is made. On the tenth day the child's grandmothers, who have stayed in the house, go to bathe in the sea, which they do by going to fish. The child is bathed in a bowl or a bucket of fresh water, but they call it bathing in the sea.[20] A feast is made for its bathing.

SICKNESS AND MEDICINE

The Cure, the Diagnosis

Prevention of disease is almost unknown in Lau and it is difficult to make the natives take precautions against infection. It is known that some diseases spread (*ndewa*), but the persons infected are not avoided. Lepers are isolated by law, but are visited by their relatives and friends. In fact, one wise woman thinks that there is more leprosy now because lepers are isolated. Epidemics are called *mate taka*.

Sick persons are much downcast and lie helpless with a blanket over their faces, hardly answering when spoken to. Even taking into consideration that the commonest illnesses are fevers, which have depressing effect, Lauans do not stand up to illness. They also appear to judge a disease by its feeling. As soon as the depressing effect is over, the patient throws off his blanket, sits up, and goes about before he has recovered, hence attacks of fever last longer than necessary.

If a man is ill away from home, his people immediately take him home. The kinsfolk visit the patient. They sit and talk together, and at night have kava, often until late. If the patient be better, he sits up to receive the visitors.

The great number of names of diseases at first sight suggests a precise and highly developed diagnosis. For instance, some of the diseases of the abdomen are called: *ramberambe tu i kete, wanggangga i kete, ngata lua, oso, mbura a mbete, mbati yate mbondra;* some kinds of "octopus." But an informant explains:

> They are all in the belly, but the names differ; it all depends on what is good for them (*kena yanga*); if a man is ill in the belly, they send for all those who know the names of diseases; they try one, then another; they come and touch (*vamotha*) the patient. If they touch the patient and he gets relief, they bring some medicine. It is our hand that is effective."

[20] Wailevu means great water. In Lau it is the sea, but in Viti Levu it refers to a river. The migration of the custom may explain the anomaly.

1: Hocart Y-5 (ca. 1920) 1929 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Lakemba

particularly crabs; sea water, including any food from the sea; raw things and cold things, such as coconuts and ripe bananas. At one time when a boy was undergoing a light massage, it was tapu to make kava in the house. Some medicines carry no tapu, for others it lasts during the lifetime of the patient. That which is prohibited is called the *tambu* of the cure, also its *kalou*. At the close of the treatment the patient bathes, "washes off the medicine." Sometimes the bathing takes the form of a fumigation.

Gifts are then presented to the leech and a feast, called the bathing feast (*i silisili*). It is common for a convalescent of Lakemba to go to the Southern Islands, called leading astray (*vakasesea*) or taking the air (*vakathangithangi*). A man will go to his mother's kinsfolk. The low-born do not come to Lakemba when they are ill.

Following are a number of treatments, some of which I witnessed, some I recorded from dictation, others I copied from notebooks kept by natives:

Abscesses and boils.—Boils, while always numerous, are more common in March, when they are called yam boils (*mbo ni uvi*), because the yam matures at that time. An abscess should be allowed to burst, because if lanced it will run to another spot and appear there. Remedies: (a) chop four leaves of *kura* in banana leaf, mix them with oil, rub mixture gently on injured member for about ten minutes, follow by drinking a potion of the liquid. Continue for two days, when the patient bathes; continue for another two days, patient again bathes. Tapu: mangoes, raw things, grated coconut. (b) The following treatment can be carried out only if the abscess has not been lanced: scrape stems of *walinggio*, *kura*, and lemon, and rub on with leaves of *tumandu*. Place in basin a number of wet leaves of *sinu* and of *uthi*; over them place four hot stones. The patient, covered with bark cloth, bends over the basin and remains for some time, when he is uncovered. Wiping off the moisture, he lies down. Following the treatment I witnessed, the remedy for "brain chewing octupus" was applied (p. 165). After one application the first day, the second and third days no medicine was given. On the fourth day the treatment was repeated, and so on until the cure was effected. Tapu: unnecessary talking during treatment; quiet in the house for four days; the removal of any object brought into the house. (c) For boils, heat a *kura* leaf, roll it between the palms of the hands, and apply.

Asthma (*theno*).—No cure was obtained. For shortness of breath, cut and peal a stem of *siti*; useful in a race.

Mberaambete (the priest is late [because before the priest can come, the patient will die]).—A disease on the edge of the abdomen at the lowest ribs; obstructs the stomach. The name of one who possesses a cure is mentioned and the patient falls asleep with the mere talking it over. The leech is brought, who touches the patient, thus effecting a recovery.

Blows (*wai ni motu*).—(a) Scrape *Casuarina* and *Barringtonia*; one reticulum; strain, heat, and drink. Tapu: fermented coconut, lemon, kava, Brazilian plum, raw food. Bathing: fumigate with *uthi* and *waro*, using four stones. (b) Eight leaves of *suvakalou*; make eight potions and eight ointments; a stem of *walcanggio* to scrape and drink as complement of the medicine, using another reticulum. Tapu: kava, lemons, fermented coconut, offal [? ashes on the hair], Brazilian plum. Bathing: eight stones, candle-nut, a little, but plenty of *matiyavi*. (c) A fruiting branch of *walcanggio*, eight leaves as potion and ointment, and one steam as complement of the potion. On fruiting branch, four stems only should be turned toward the east. Tapu: raw food and fermented pungent food, kava, Brazilian plum. (d) *Tatangia*, the side turned